NATURE AND WORTH OF THE SCIENCE OF CHURCH HISTORY.

AN

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ADDRESS.

In addressing the Directors of the Union Theological Seminary and this respected audience, upon an occasion of such solemn interest to myself, and so closely connected with the welfare of the institution which they guard and cherish, I would, if possible, forget my own unfitness for the office to which I have been called, and accept its duties in the name and for the sake of the Great Head of the Church. It is the history of his church which I am to teach. And if the guidance of his wisdom is needed at all times by all his disciples, it is especially needed by his ministry; yet more by those called to train men for his ministry, and in some peculiar respects by one who is to narrate the history of his kingdom to its future preachers in our age and country.

The history of the church is not the straightforward narrative of the fortunes of an isolated community with inferior ends in view, but it is an account of the rise, the changes and the growth of the most wonderful economy the world has known, embracing the most comprehensive purposes which human thought can grasp. It has maintained itself in the historic progress of the race, as has no empire. It has been aggressive, attacked, progressive and diffusive as has no other community. It has moved through States, intertwined itself with institutions, changed politics, shaped national and individual character, affected all moral and social interests, and been interwoven with the whole web of human destiny. He who would know the principles which have really controlled human thought and action, will, if he be wise, explore the records of that kingdom which has had the longest duration and the strongest influence. On human grounds alone it may challenge the most earnest study of every thoughtful mind. But this history is invested with a solemn, a sublime interest, when it is viewed as the record of a divine economy, established in an apostate world, centering in the incarnation of the Son of God, and having for its object the redemption of the race, through the might of the Holy Spirit. As such, it contains the most antagonistic elements. For, though the origin of this kingdom be

divine, and though its consummation will be the glorious and untroubled manifestation of God's graee and wisdom, yet, between the origin and the eonsummation there is a theatre of strife, where the strongest energies of good and ill, all the forces of a supernatural, and all the forces of a natural kingdom wage perpetual warfare. It is in the vanquishing of migl‡ty and subtle foes that the kingdom of Christ has shown its superior and supreme authority. There is progress, but it is progress through conflict. There are the victories of faith, there is also the partial success of unbelief, there is advance in spiritual freedom, there is the exaltation of spiritual despotism; there are enemies without, and feuds within; there is the growth, there is also the perversion of Christian doctrine; there is the church separate from the world, and the church eontending against submission to, and domineering over, States and empires; and all this, not in one land, or one eentury, but from East to West, through many centuries, in the most puissant nations of the earth. And if it is ehiefly in the conflicts of the race that we are to read the destiny of the race, then through these, its mightiest confliets, may we be taught, that he who would reach forth his hand to grasp the solemn urn that holds the oracles of human fate can find it only in the Christian church. And if Lord Bacon could say in view of the visible creation: "God forbid that we give forth the dream of our fancy as the model of the world, but may he rather vouchsafe us his grace that we may indite a revelation and true vision of the march and signet of the Creator impressed upon ereation;" much more ought he, who explores the revelations of God in his new and spiritual creation, to feel the eonstant need of that divine illumination which can alone enable him to distinguish what is from God and what is from man, what is transient, and what is worthy of lasting veneration; which can alone enable him to get above all these contests, so as to read their meaning, and so to read their meaning as to see the march and signet of redemptive graee impressed upon the moral history of our earth.

While the position of a teacher of Church History is thus, from the nature of the ease, always responsible and arduous, it is especially so to one who is called to discharge the functions of this office in our age and in our land. There are advantages, indeed, as well as disadvantages, but both the advantages and the disadvantages increase the measure of his toil. There is an aecumulation of historical materials, and this is an advantage; but they are more than sufficient to task the freshest powers in the longest life. There are now better digests of the materials than were even imagined possible, half a cen-

tury ago, but the teacher must verify their details and try their principles. The presumptuous and ignorant assaults of a base philosophy against the Christian church, have well nigh spent their force; no sane and instructed mind would now dare to represent it as injurious to humanity, as the work of priestcraft, as a complex of endless and useless logomachy, and as sterile of all rational interest. These vulgar objections had their origin in schools which imagined that matter was more intelligible than mind, and in countries where the history of Christianity was identified with the progress of Romish corruptions; and they now live only in the souls that are the fitting receptacles of the veriest dregs of human thought. They have been refuted in part by the very progress of Christianity, as well as by a better philosophy, and a more comprehensive view of man's history. But these larger views of human history bring with them still graver duties to the historian of the church, because most of them assign to the church a subordinate position in the development of the race, and thus impose the necessity of giving a more philosophical character to the exposition of that history, so that it shall be seen to embrace all, as well as the spiritual interests of humanity.

There are also disadvantages in the study of this branch of learning, springing from our systems of education and national habits of thought. As a people, we are more deficient in historical training than in almost any other branch of scientific research. We live in an earnest and tumultuous present, looking to a vague future, and comparatively cut off from the prolific past — which is still the mother of us all. We forget that the youngest people are also the oldest, and should therefore be most habituated to those "fearless and reverent questionings of the sages of other times, which," as Jeffrey well says, "is the permitted necromancy of the wise." We love the abstractions of political theories and of theology better than we do the concrete realities of history. Church history has been studied from a sort of general notion that it ought to be very useful, rather than from any lively conviction of its inherent worth. History is to us the driest of studies; and the history of the church is the driest of the dry — a collection of bare names, and facts, and lifeless dates. It is learned by rote, and kept by mnemonic helps. Whole tracts of its course realize to us the notion of the philosopher in Addison, who used to maintain the existence of tenebrific stars, whose peculiar office it was to ray out positive darkness. Its sources are buried in the dust of alcoves, and when exhumed, it is seldom with the insignia of a resurrection. They are investigated for aid in present

polemics, not to know the past but to conquer in an emergency; as if one should run over American history only in view of incorporating a bank, or passing a tariff-bill. While we all confess that there are sources of sublime interest in the study of the visible heavens, and that no research is too deep into the successive strata of the solid earth, we are slow to believe that in the course of human history, we are to find the revelation of the sublimities of a spiritual kingdom, and the registry of the successive epochs of that new creation, in which divine wisdom and love are manifested and mirrored forth, as they cannot be in the orbits of lifeless stars, or in the growth of the unconscious earth.

While I attempt, then, as a subject appropriate to the occasion, to set forth the Nature and Worth of the Science of Church History, I would also crave the indulgence of this audience to my seeming exaggerations of an unfamiliar theme, in the belief that its inherent dignity will commend it to their favorable regard.

And I propose to speak in the first place, of the nature or true idea of the science of church history; and, in the second place, to show its worth as a part of theological training especially in our times.

I. The nature of the science of church history. What is, then, church history as a science? What is the true idea of this branch of theological learning?

The different departments of theological study are usually and most appropriately grouped under the four divisions of exegetical, doctrinal, historical and practical theology. The scope of each branch is well defined by the term applied to it. Historical theology embraces all that pertains to the historic progress of the church, under the historical point of view. Doctrines and polity as well as external facts belong to it, yet not as doctrines and not as polity, but as the history of doctrines and polity, reproducing them with impartiality and critical sagacity in the order in which they have really existed. The church historian ought indeed so to teach, as, by his instructions, to confirm soundness in faith and attachment to ecclesiastical order; he ought to apply to history at all points the test of that word which alone is inspired and authoritative; but in order to do this, his first duty is to present the facts themselves in the order of their occurrence. Then he may judge them in their bearings on the great ends for which the church was instituted. And all the facts in both the external and internal history of the church, its progress and its reverses, its constitution, doctrines and ritual, its theologies and its spiritual life, its effects on nations and the influence of races upon

itself, its contests with human thought in all the phases of philosophy, its bearings on social, moral and political well-being, its relations to art and culture, all these points fall, in their historical aspects, under the department of historical theology, they constitute the materials of the science of church history.

What is, then, the true idea of this science? We may answer this inquiry by considering these three points: that it is history, that it is church history, and that it is the science of church history.

1. It is, in the first place, history with which we have to do; and the history of the church falls under the conditions and laws, and has the dignity of all history. It is what has been transacted on the theatre of the world in its past centuries through human agencies, made known to us by means of monuments and testimony. It is a body of facts, but specifically of facts about the human race. It is with man that history has to do; we can talk of a history of animals or of nature only by courtesy. It is with men collectively that history has to do, and not as individuals; historical personages are historical because they are the actors in events which affect the general good. The life of an individual is a biography; the life of a community is its history. And such a history is made up of a *series* of events, an orderly succession, no one of which can be understood except in its connections with the rest. And it is a series of events containing all the great and permanent interests of humanity. Human history in its real character is not an account of kings and of wars; it is the unfolding of the moral, the political, the artistic, the social, and the spiritual progress of the human family. The time will yet come when the names of dynasties and of battles shall not form the titles to its chapters. And the events of history are great, because they are freighted with the weal and woe of States, with the social and moral welfare of mankind. Historical facts have not only an existence in space and time, but they have also a moral life, they are instinct with the vitality of human interests. The whole movements of past centuries, and the whole momentum of centuries yet unborn may meet upon a single plain, a single day, a single will. And of such epochs is the history of our earth made up in its majestic course, as the historic races of the human family have come one after another into the van of that uncounted and ever advancing host which started from its cradle in the East, swarmed through the plains of the Orient, skirted all the outline of the Mediterranean, toiled with slow advance from southern Europe even to its Northern shores, leaped the flaming walls of the old world, and now finds its largest

theatre in this our Western continent, whither all nations, tribes and tongues are congregating, bearing with them the elements, from which, it may be, the highest destiny of man is to be wrought out.

The greatness of history consists then, essentially, in these two things: that it is a body of facts, and that these facts are a means of leading us to a knowledge of the great realities of human welfare, and of the actual development of the race under the pressure of all its vital interests. Its solidity is in its facts; it is above the sphere of mere speculation, as much as is nature, though it is a proper and the highest object of speculative inquiry. And it is impossible to get at a comprehensive view of man's nature and destiny, without the lights and monuments of the past. The most speculative nation of modern times, in its reäction from the unsatisfying results of its universal and abstract philosophical systems, has thrown itself with ardor into the most elaborate historical investigations. The most imposing pantheistic system which was ever framed, the most compact and consistent, was bereft of its power, chiefly in its attempt to reconstruct the moral and religious history of mankind in conformity with its desolating principles. It fell upon this stone and was broken. It touched the monuments of time and became impotent. Fiction may be great, but history is grand. Philosophy is noble, but history is its test.

It is now the province of the historian to revivify the past. Its successive periods are to live again upon the historic page. "Even what from its antiquity is but little known," says Harris in his Hermes, "may, on that very account, have all the charm of novelty." It will have this, if the historian gives us, not dead facts, but living men, and broad human interests. Of that high art which thus makes the past present and the absent real, Gibbon is the greatest English master, though his vision reached only to the confines of the central kingdom of our earth. The historian is also to reproduce events, so that we may read them better than did the very actors in them; for he who is fighting in the thick of the conflict sees but a small part of the movements of the army, and even the general who directs the host cannot foresee the results of his victory or disaster. But in the results the historian is to read the causes. He is to teach us the events in the light of their principles and laws. These he is to seek out with a patient, a sympathizing, a reverential, and a truly inductive spirit. And his true office is not completed, if he gives us only partial principles and laws, but only as he gives us those which truly explain the greatest results of the greatest events. It is indeed true

that historical causes are so manifold, that nothing is easier than to build up some brilliant and partial theory, and cite facts in its confirmation, but it only requires a more thorough study of history to disclose the deception, just as it only needs an open vision to see that a Grecian temple, or a Gothic cathedral or a phalanstery is not the whole of the landscape, though it may engross the meditations of some rapt enthusiast. He who thus reads history in the light of all its impregnable facts, to get from them its laws, will be led along to see that human motives and interests do not embrace the whole of it, but that it is also the sphere of a divine justice, and the theatre of a divine kingdom.

2. And this leads us to our second point, and that is, that the subject of our science is not only history, but church history, that is, the record of the progress of the kingdom of God, intermingling with and acting upon all the other interests of the human race, and shaping its destiny.

That man looks with limited or with sealed vision upon the annals of the human race, who does not descry, running through all its course, underlying it, and prominent above it, the workings of a spiritual kingdom, whose influence, in one or another form, has defined the metes and bounds of history. To the rest of history it bears the same relation that the granite does to the earth's strata, it is both deepest and highest, it supports by its solidity beneath, and juts out in its sublimity in the loftiest summits.

The character of a people is shaped in part by its geographical position, whether along the lines of rivers, or among the mountains; it is formed in part by the influence of climate, and in the same climate, by diversities of race; political institutions serve to make men submissive or independent; social influences act with keener energy, reaching to the very fireside; more potent still are strictly moral causes, the degree in which right or wrong is practically applied; but that which shapes the whole character, and determines the final destiny of a people, that which has always done this, and from the nature of the case must do this, is its religious faith. For here are the highest objects acting on the deepest and most permanent wants of the human heart. And in the whole history of man we can trace the course of one shaping, o'ermastering and progressive power, before which all others have bowed, and that is the spiritual kingdom of God, having for its object the redemption of man from the ruins of the apostasy.

This kingdom gives us the three ideas in whose light we may best

read the history of our race, and they are sin, holiness and redemption.

If we could but fully realize the majestic simplicity of this kingdom, its spiritual nature and sublime intent, if we could make present to us the full idea of it, which is not an idea alone, but also a reality; if we could see that holiness is the great end of our being, and that sin is its very opposite, and that redemption is for the removal of sin, and the establishment of a holy kingdom, then were we in the right position for reading, in their highest meaning, all the records of our race.

To narrate the history of this kingdom is the object of church history. And it brings us at once to the very centre and life of all history. By its light we may discern the very structure of human history, even as it is said that the anatomist may dissect the Brazilian fire-fly by the light which it emits. It runs through the chronicles of recorded time, from the beginning even until now. It has educated the race. It was revealed in the first promise; it survived the flood of waters; it was made a special covenant in the family of Abraham; the law given on Sinai was to prepare for its full manifestation; the Jewish people was secluded that it might bear it safe in type and prophecy, and in their very lineage, in the midst of the corruptions of Pagan idolatries; the heathen nations came under one empire, and through them was diffused one language, that they might be prepared for its complete advent; and it was brought to its full establishment, and invested with all its functions and powers, when the Son of God became incarnate, that He might die for our redemption; and from this, the era of the Incarnation, this kingdom has gone on, conflicting and conquering, with each century binding new trophies upon its victorious brow, adding strength to its loins and swiftness to its feet; and now it remains, still militant, hopeful as in its earliest youth, and wiser in its matured vigor, diffusing far and wide its innumerable blessings, and bearing in its divine powers and sacred truths the hopes and destiny of the human race.

The true idea of church history then embraces these points: God has made a revelation of himself to man, having for its object the redemption of man. "What education is to the individual, that is revelation to the race." This revelation is made in a real, instituted, historical economy. This economy centres in the Person and Work of our Lord, who is the living Head of a new creation. Of the life, the doctrines and the growth of this new creation, the elect church, he is the source, through the energy of his Spirit. And the history

of the church tells us how far the redemptive purposes of God have been accomplished in the actual course of human events. That history, in its actual course has been a conneeted series, all its facts being bound together by their common referenee to Christ and his kingdom. That history has been a developing process, not only in the way of external diffusion, subduing the nations, not only in its external politics, changing to meet the exigencies of the times, not only in the applieation of its principles more deeply and sharply to all the relations and institutions of society, but also in its doetrines which have been unfolded, defined and systematized, so as to ward off objeetions, and to bring the Christian system into harmony with all other truth as a seientific whole. This developing proeess is not arbitrary, but it has its laws, and also its tests, both of whieh it is the duty of the historian to set forth. He is to exhibit all the elements which constitute the Christian church, in their just relations, doctrines, polity, spiritual life, and external events acting upon eaeh other, and all working together in the unfolding of the kingdom of God. And this history does not stand alone; it is a part of universal history, containing its eentral and eontrolling elements; so that as a mere matter of historic justice, he who would study the records of the race with a humility like that which animates the true minister and interpreter of nature, will find impressed upon them the principles and laws of that supernatural kingdom whose final glories shall be hymned in anthems of exulting praise in that heavenly realm where the triumphant chureh shall eelebrate the centuries of its jubilee.

This is the general idea of church history. And here I cannot forbear citing a passage from the works of the elder Edwards, our greatest American divine, which, taken for all in all, is perhaps the most remarkable he ever penned, and which shows the clearest insight into the real nature of the Christian church. In his letter to the Trustees of Princeton College, when they invited him to their presidency, he says: "I have on my mind and heart a great work, which I call a History of Redemption, a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of a history, considering the affair of Christian theology, as the whole of it, in each part, stands in reference to the great work of Redemption by Jesus Christ; whieh I suppose to be of all others the grand design of God, and the summum and ultimum of all the divine operations and decrees; particularly considering all parts of the grand scheme in their historical order; the order of their existenee or their being brought forth to view in the course of divine dispensations, or the wonderful series of

successive acts and events; beginning from eternity and descending from thence to the great work and successive dispensations of the infinitely wise God, in time; considering the chief events coming to pass in the church of God, and revolutions in the world of mankind, affecting the state of the church, and the affair of redemption, which we have an account of in history or propheey, till at last we come to the general resurrection, last judgment and consummation of all things, when it shall be said: 'It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end;' concluding my work with a consideration of that perfect state of things which shall be finally settled, to last for eternity. This history will be carried on with regard to all three worlds, heaven, earth and hell, considering the connected, successive events and alterations in each, so far as the Scriptures give any light; introducing all parts of divinity in that order which is most scriptural and most natural; a method which appears to me the most beautiful and entertaining, wherein every divine doctrine will appear to the greatest advantage, in the brightest light, in the most striking manner, showing the admirable contexture and harmony of the whole." In this most striking sketch, which is only partially carried out in Edwards's Posthumous History of Redemption, and in which the very involutions of the style show the presence of the ideas that are struggling for utterance, we have an outline of the history of the church, as noble as any man ever sketched, as yet unrivalled in the English tongue, and which, of the men of his age, Jonathan Edwards alone could fully conceive: solus sed sic sol.

3. The third point necessary to an understanding of the true nature of our subject is, that church history is to be exhibited in a scientific form. It is history, it is church history, and it is the science of church history. It ought to be studied in a scientific method, in accordance with true scientific principles.

That exhibition of a subject, properly called scientific, consists essentially in this — that its facts are brought under their legitimate laws or principles, and that they are viewed in their connections with the causes which have produced them, and the ends to be accomplished by them. The basis of all science is facts; the first process is to bring these facts under their appropriate general laws. Many philosophers, especially in the natural sciences, stop here, neglecting both the efficient and final causes, scouting them as metaphysical, or banishing them to what they esteem a barren theology. This view not only limits science, but it favors pantheism. And it is essentially unphilosophical, for the inquiry after the really efficient causes, and

the ends of phenomena is as philosophical as the inquiry after their immediate antecedents.

And what we here claim is that the history of the Christian church ought to be presented in a scientific method. As so presented, it is one of the noblest objects to which human thought can be directed. And this is now of special importance, in consequence of the prevalenee of partial and unchristian speculations about the history and destiny of the human raee.

The time is past when history could be viewed as a bare narrative of events, without any purpose or deduetions. Every body now-a-days speeulates about events, more or less, well, badly or still worse. That style of treating history too, which consisted in explaining all great events by merely personal motives, is tolerably antiquated, as if the Reformation broke out because Luther wished to marry Catherine von Bora, or Mohammedanism sprang up because Mohammed was ambitious and had visions in epilepsy. It has even been found that steam, electricity, gunpowder and printing are not sufficient to account for the whole of modern civilization, and we only wonder at the enthusiastic admirer of the typographic art, who exclaimed: "Be not deceived, Luther was great, but Gutenberg was greater." All thinking men must and will seek for higher and better causes for the great events of time. At the same time, many a brilliant and partial generalization of the facts of history, which protrudes some social or political object as the great end of the race, is seducing even earnest and thoughtful minds from the simplicity and sublimity of the Christian faith. And hence we say it is well to present the history of the church in a truly scientifie way, that the superiority of Christianity may be evinced. Church history is now to be conducted and taught in comparison and contrast with the false philosophy of history. And, as thus taught, it is the best philosophy of history which can be written, the best vindication of the ways of God with man. It is the true philosophy of human history.

What is necessary to such a view of it we will proceed to state in the light of that definition of science which has been already given. According to this, the scientific exhibition of the history of the church would consist in the presentation of all the facts that concern the kingdom of God in Christ, in their orderly succession, with their causes, whether proximate or ultimate, and in their bearings on the divine purpose for the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ, which purpose will be fulfilled in the perfect fellowship of a divine kingdom, where justice shall adjust and love harmonize the relations of all its members.

For the sake of distinctness, it may be well to bring out more definitely the points embraced in this statement.

Church history rests upon a broad basis of facts, given in the Revelation on which it reposes, or in the course of its history. This is the basis of the science.

These facts are to be presented, as they occurred, in orderly succession, grouped around the signal epochs in which the combined interests and relations of the church have undergone some decisive change. Such points of convergence and divergence are, for example, the age of Constantine and the Reformation. This would give us the real historic course and main epochs of the history.

Here, then, we have a series of events, comprising the great and decisive interests of the human race. The inquiry next suggested is, what are the principles and laws upon which this development has proceeded, what are the actual principles, and what is their inherent worth? The proximate principles, now, are unquestionably the motives and feelings of the actors in the events. But the motives of the actors are determined by more general causes, inherent in the times and the institutions in the midst of which they live and act.

And in determining these more general causes, Christian philosophy runs counter to all naturalistic or pantheistic schemes. The latter find them in an impersonal reason, in universal ideas, in human interests or rights, in abstract laws, in social impulses. The former refers them ultimately to the purpose of God, to a real personal Providence, to an Incarnate Redeemer, to the living agencies in a divine kingdom. The one makes them to be from God, the other from reason; the one speaks of a real manifestation of God, the other of an advance in human freedom. The latter equally with the former must concede the actual existence of the church and its history; but he tries to explain this history without God, or Christ, or the Spirit's influences, and without assuming the reality of the truths which centre in this kingdom. Christian philosophy does not deny that men are animated by ideas of justice and freedom, by political and social rights, for this were unwise and contrary to fact, but it says that the facts of history are not fully and rationally explained by them alone, that they demand more than this. It does not deny that there is in history a mixture of causes, some good and some evil, but it says that the overruling ones have been for good, and chiefly through the church of Christ, and wholly through the providence of God. It claims that the very facts of church history, which all must grant to be a part of human history, cannot be rationally accounted

for, excepting on the supposition of the historic reality of the grand revelation of God in Christ and his kingdom.

Abstract ideas, or human interests, or both combined, will not account for the rise and growth of such an economy as is the Christian church. It has been admirably said: "There is one symbolical book of the Christian faith, which will ever do despite to the attacks of a negative criticism, and this is the history of the world. In proportion as historical investigations are elaborated into an universal historical science, in the same proportion will Christ be acknowledged as the eternal and divine substance of the whole historical life of the world, and his sacred person will greet us everywhere on the historic page, as it also greets us everywhere in the Scriptures of our faith."[1]

But to explain aright this historical progress of the church, we need a test as well as a cause; we need to ask for the value and authority of the facts. For without such a test we are in utter confusion, and must take all as it comes, for better or worse. We may become the prey of any system of delusion under the vague notion that it is a part of the historical development. Rome might claim us, for she has been developed; all the systems of philosophy might claim us, for all the systems of philosophy have been developed; all the sects in Christendom might invoke our homage, for all the sects in Christendom have been developed; all the parties out of Christendom might claim us, for all the parties out of Christendom have been developed. And if we were divided among them all, little of faith or reason would be left to us.

No idea more vague or unsubstantial has ever been more current than has that of a mere development. It is not merely pernicious, it is also worthless, unless we can show what it is that is developed, what are the laws that regulate the development, and what are the tests by which it is to be tried. And here is where the philosophy of history must differ from the philosophy of nature. In studying nature we may be content with generalizing the facts, thus getting at its laws; although a rigid and complete method would compel us to carry our speculations still farther. But in studying history, in the investigation of moral causes, we need a test by which to try the facts and the principles; for sin is in history as well as holiness, error as well as truth, man as well as God. We need a test, and one not taken at random, but approved as such by the very course of history itself.

And to the believer in a divine revelation, such a test is given in

[1] So, for substance, Professor Brandis of Bonn, in his History of Philosophy.

the sacred Scriptures. By its truths and doctrines all history, and especially the history of the church, is to be judged. And that this test is not an arbitrary one may be inferred, not only from the proof of the inspiration of the Bible, but also from the actual course of human history. As a matter of fact, the truths revealed in the Bible have been the touch-stone which has tried men's spirits. Human speculation has not gone beyond, has not even fathomed its wonderful revelations. It has been the historical arbiter of Christian controversy. Its perversions have been judgments, and its truths light and life. It is a marvellous thing to see the supremacy of this Revelation in the actual course of human history. It is instructive to read the history of the church, and all human history, by its light. For, as a matter of simple fact, the whole history of the church might be summed up with saying that it consists in pouring into the human race the treasures of this volume, there to germinate, until the kingdom revealed in word and promise shall be fully manifested in its reality and power.

To complete the philosophical view of Christian history, one additional point is needed, and that is the exhibition of the end or object to which the history is tending. Of anything living and spiritual, we do not have the true conception, until we know the end for which it was made, as well as the actual course and laws of its growth. We understand man fully only in the light of the ends of his being. We have no intelligent apprehension of the true nature of the Christian church, until we see not only the course and laws of its history, but also *how* the whole course of its history bears on the great object for which it was instituted. That object is the bringing the race back to union with God, through the grace of Christ, by the influences of the Spirit, and in the fellowship of men one with another. And this object can only be achieved by the application of the principles of God's kingdom to all human relations and institutions, bringing them all under its divine supremacy, in accordance with justice and in subordination to love. It is the bringing all inferior ends into subjection to the highest end, it is the making the laws of a divine kingdom supreme over all lower laws. Church history shows how far this end has been actually accomplished, and it ought to make us both wise and earnest in carrying on the church still further towards the same great object.

In the greatness and grandeur of the end which Christianity thus holds out to man, the superiority of the Christian system over all other systems is most fully manifested. It embraces more than they

all, and what is more adapted to human wants, and what is more consistent with the facts of history. For the most current and fascinating of these schemes represents some purely human or social interests, some organization for the promotion of "humanitarian" ends, as the great object for which the race has been toiling, as the grand secret so long hidden in the womb of parturient time, with which she has been in travail these six thousand years, and of which she is soon to be delivered. But never was there so long a labor for so slight a progeny. This toil of all the nations, these conflicts of the church, this slow advance through strife, only to issue in the securing of political rights and a better social state! If any view could lead us to despair of Providence and of man, it is such a view of human history as this. All the great labors and conflicts of the past have been for unreal objects. And this is the view of those who believe in man alone, and in the supremacy of reason; they are the very ones who find the least of truth in history, and nothing of permanency in the church, which still has been made up of rational men.

But while protesting against such philosophemes and such a view of human history, as essentially defective, and contrary to fact, we should also be careful not to err on the other extreme, and deny human rights and human reason, and be indifferent to social progress. It is a dishonor to the church to suppose that it can be indifferent to these questions. One of the ends of Christianity, not its highest end, but necessary thereto, is to elevate reason, to secure freedom, and to enhance all social blessings. To take any other ground is to leave Christianity in the back ground. The Christian church must set itself right with these, or it loses its hold of the age, as did Rome, three centuries ago. It must show its superiority to all other systems, chiefly by showing that only on its basis can human rights be safely adjusted, human welfare promoted, and a higher social state introduced among mankind. Christianity is designed to make this world fairer, and wiser, and happier. It must show its supremacy, by laboring for all human interests with the wisest zeal and the calmest energy, and the most assured conviction, keeping them subordinate in theory and in life, to the one comprehensive purpose which includes all the others, and that is, redemption from sin. Without haste, but without rest, earnestly, yet wisely, protesting against all that is unjust, and laboring for its eradication, with an intense sympathy for all who suffer, and bear the burdens, and know the wretchedness of our mortal life, giving with the largest charity, having the very spirit of self-sacrifice in heart and in life, ever working for

truth and righteousness, and believing that they will come, using, as has been said, the very ruins of our earth, to build up the temple of our Lord, — in such a spirit, and with such ends, must the church of the redeemed labor, if it is to set forth the inherent superiority of the Christian system; and under such aspects must it be viewed, that it may realize the full idea of the kingdom of Christ, as a holy society exhibiting, the manifest glory of the supreme God in the redemption of mankind from *all* the consequences of the great apostasy.

Such is the sublime view of the great objects at which God is aiming, and of the final destiny of the race, which is given us in the Christian church and its history. All the interests of the human race are garnered up in its comprehensive purposes. It has principles so universal and efficient, that they alone can reconcile the conflicts and restore the disorders of our fallen state. It gives us the most elevated and inspiring view of the ultimate destiny of the human race. It gives us not a speculation, but a real historical economy; not a merely projected scheme, but one which has endured and conquered, one which has thus far approved itself as adapted to human wants and to human welfare. It gives us a kingdom which reaches forward through the world, beyond the world, even to the eternity of our being. It is a kingdom, too, in which are first adjusted the highest antagonisms, as the means of harmonizing all our lesser conflicts. It gives us agencies sufficient to carry all these ends into fulfilment. This kingdom, reposing for its foundation upon the purpose of the Father, centering in the God-man, divine and human both, animated by the living energy of the Holy Spirit, adjusting the relations between a holy God and a sinful world, intended to reconcile men with each other as well as with God, and having for its object the final redemption of mankind, — such a kingdom is as far superior in its majesty and rightful authority to any merely philosophical speculation about the destiny of the race, as fact is superior to theory, and as a divinely-revealed system is superior to the one-sided excogitations of the poor sciolist, who talks as if humanity were all, and as if his own speculations were the first light that has ever illumined the earth.

This exhibition of the great ends to be wrought out by the church completes the scientific view of its history, and gives to it fulness and roundness; that which was from the beginning in the purpose of the Father is that which is realized in the end in the kingdom of his Son. And thus the circle is completed, the end returns to the beginning, and God is all in all.

And if the inquiry about the ends for which the race was made is a necessary inquiry, if no science can be complete which does not answer it, and if that science is best, which answers it from the point of view which embraces all the relations of man, then, on the basis of the Christian revelation, may we erect the best science of human history, for here we know by the sure word of prophecy, what is the great end set before the human race.

Such a scientific view of the history of the church as is that, whose outline we have thus attempted to sketch, gives us the real philosophy of human history, and that, too, not on speculative but on historical grounds. That there is such a philosophy not all the vagaries and delusions of infidel speculations should lead us to deny. They should rather induce us to use the old prerogative of our faith, that of turning the weapons forged in the camp of its enemies, into the means of its own defence and victory. They should lead us to show that that view of human nature and destiny, which is given by the light of Christianity, is immeasurably more comprehensive and elevating, more friendly to real progress and rights, more accordant with the whole welfare of mankind, and more consistent with all the facts of history than any scheme which infidel speculation is capable of projecting. Until any one can propound a system, which shall propose to do more, and what is more needed, than the redemption of a sinful world through an incarnate God, in an eternal kingdom, whose blessings are bestowed on all who will accept them, the supremacy of Christianity as a system must needs be conceded. And this is our confidence — either Christianity is to go on, and do its work, and redeem the race — or it will be superseded by something higher and better, and if so, — by what?

And it is our conviction that if any would really study the history of our earth in a truly philosophical and docile spirit, even if he began from the merely human point of view, asking only what has actually approved itself as best and highest to man, that he would be led through the race above the race; that from the very facts of the case he would come to the recognition of the existence, and authority and need of just such a kingdom, and of just such a view of human history, as is given us in the records of the Christian church. If any do not come to such a result, it is because they do not study history in a truly inductive spirit, or else they study it with some preconceived bias against Christianity. Those who think metaphysics to be the highest of blessings, and abstractions to be the great realities, might come to different results. But this is because they have neither

reverence for facts, nor a right method of interpreting them. They do not study history to learn, but to try their own schemes upon it. They destroy the substance of the facts to make out their theories. There was once a statue of Isis, veiled, in the hall of a priest's temple at Memphis. His son, longing to see the face, struck off the veil with hammer and chisel, and found only a block of raw, shapeless stone. And this wise child is no unapt representative of those who study history without reverence, and without taking into account the fact that man is a religious being; they may strike off the veil of the divinity, and then say there is no divinity there; but they have not studied the statue, they have only tried the power of a hammer and a chisel. If we reverence the divinity that is in history, we shall see it through its veil, we shall feel and know its power, we shall see that there is a divinity which shapes man's ends, rough-hew them as he may.

I should be doing a silent injustice to the memory of a venerable and beloved teacher, if I closed this part of my subject without acknowledging my indebtedness for a right view of church history to the teachings and writings of the most eminent church historian of our day, the venerated and beloved Neander. His favorite motto, inscribed under his likeness was — Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. In this spirit he lived and studied, and now, we trust, he sees face to face, taken, alas! too soon, as we vainly say, in the midst of his gigantic toil upon his incomparable history. Still can we see that familiar and bent frame, that countenance so Jewish in outline, and so Christian in expression when he let out upon you the full light of his eyes, usually veiled. The records of the Christian church were the study of his life, and his works are a monument to the dignity of its history. He explored the dark mines and brought to light radiant treasures. He united the most laborious research, with the most genial sympathy for all that is human, for all that is Christian. We almost forget that he may have been too lenient, when we remember how easy it is to be too intolerant. We think less that he fails in the graphic narrative of detail, because we feel so deeply the richness of that spirit, which could make the whole of Christian history so dear to our hearts, and so elevating to our faith. While we would ever judge his particular opinions only by the highest standard, we would speak of himself as we ought to speak of a man, who passed through all the conflicts of his age and country, and kept firm and high his conviction of the supernatural origin of Christianity, and had a living sense of Christ's

grace, and in all his life and writings exemplified the power of that faith which overcometh the world, and of that charity which is the greatest of the virtues. And the unobtrusiveness of his studious life has been equalled only by the extent of his growing influence. His memorial shall not depart away, and his name shall live from generation to generation.

II. The Worth of the Science of Church History. If the view we have given of the science of church history be correct, we can hardly over-estimate its value for all who are interested in the great problems of human destiny, and especially for those who are to be the preachers of the gospel of Christ, in our age and country.

1. And it has, in the first place, an inherent dignity. It is valuable for its own sake.

If man was made to know, so that all knowledge is good, then must that history be of an elevating influence, and most worthy of regard, which reveals to us what the race is for, what it has been and is to be, and which brings us into the heart of all its conflicts. There is something admirable, worthy even of our wonder, in seeing the might and progress of a spiritual kingdom in a sinful world. There is no history to be compared with it in its intrinsic interest and grandeur. Beginning among the hills of Judea, it went forth amid the chaos of pagan idolatries, and within a century its churches were planted, in spite of persecution, in all the chief cities of the Roman empire. It became strong through suffering. The succession to its chief churches was, as Ranke says, a succession to martyrdom, as well as to office, but the succession was always full. It fought in the shade, only because the air was filled with the arrows of its foes. It became so strong in Rome, that neither a Nero nor a Decius could quench its fires in blood. The persecutions of a Diocletian through the whole empire, only served to reveal its hidden might. As Dante says of the Pope, that his adversity was great, until he became great in his adversity, so was it with the early church; and when it became great in its adversity, and the emperors could not suppress it, then they bowed before it. It had existed in the catacombs, but under Constantine it was established upon the throne of the Caesars, and its worship was celebrated in the basilicas of Constantinople. It changed the whole face of the ancient world. When the northern barbarian hordes desolated the empire, the church was consolidated and prepared for their coming; so that although Italy was laid waste, the kingdom of Christ subdued these fierce foes unto herself. This irruption of the North upon the South, was the providential means

of spreading Christianity from the south to the north of Europe. The church converted the Teutonic races, which, under its auspices, have been the regenerating element in modern civilization. When the balance of the political power of Europe was transferred from the south to the north, the Papacy of the south resisted and subdued the imperial encroachments, in that long strife between Guelph and Ghibelline. It gave to Europe strength to resist that Moslem zeal which strove to scale its battlements. It influenced the prowess of that honorable yet corrupt chivalry, which showed both its might and its blindness, in regaining the sepulchre of our Lord. Through its very successes, the church had now become almost inebriated; and in the pride of its power, it usurped the place due only to its Head. Yet, even in the night of the middle ages, its scholars were giving needed shape and precision to its theological systems. The learning which it brought from the East, awakened a new spirit of inquiry; its despotism provoked national resistance; its Pelagianism called out the spiritual prowess of the heroes of the Reformation, and the old Gospel was spoken anew in their mother tongues, to the waiting nations. Rome was left in the south; and, among the free and investigating nations of the north, the church exhibited itself in new forms, to meet the exigencies of that new spirit which was spreading among the people. It was a new trial for the Christian church, whether it could maintain its authority in the midst of freedom of thought and of philosophical research. And Protestantism has proved to us that it can, — the thoughtful Protestantism of the Lutheran churches, and the aggressive and advancing Protestantism of the Reformed churches. To the latter was vouchsafed the office of maintaining the supremacy of Christianity among the freest, the most commercial nations of the earth. The aggressive and progressive portion of modern church history, belongs to this branch of the church. And nobly has it fulfilled its office, both in the old world and in the new. Calvin, once said the greatest living German historian, was the virtual founder of the United States of America. And here the Christian church still lies at the basis of our institutions, and sustains them by its power, which we feel the less, because it is so equally diffused. It has grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength. That sacred kingdom which began its contesting course at the city of Jerusalem, and passed victorious from Asia to Europe, and from the Mediterranean to the Baltic, which crossed the Atlantic in adventurous barks, has extended itself through the length and breadth of our land, and is now planted on the borders of the vast Pacific, to

carry back, it may be, the treasures of its grace, from island to island, in a returning course, to the continent and the hills whence it first sprung, and fill Jerusalem with a higher praise.

And what other history can tell such a tale, or knows such marvels, such conflicts, and such victories?

And there is not only this, its external life, — there is also its hidden, spiritual life, — there are its spiritual heroes. It has its array of martyrs and confessors. There is the refiner's fire, and in it the molten gold. It perpetually renews the story of the burning bush that is not consumed. It tells us of those who have taken poverty for their bride, and, for the good of souls, gone to the ends of the earth. It tells us of those who "have done things worthy to be written, and written what is worthy to be read." There are rivers of peace, gently flowing, "life, love and joy still gliding through;" through its whole history runs the river of God, whose depths are ever peaceful, though its surface be torn by the storms. And thus, from the history of Christ's church we may draw such spiritual lessons, that it shall be to us indeed a "book of holy doctrine," nourishing our hearts in the truth and love of God."

2. Another point of view under which the value of church history may be considered, to which our limits allow us only to advert, is its bearings on the vindication of God's providence in his moral government of the world. The strongest objections to God's providential rule, are on the field of history; and in the history and progress of the Christian church, with the aims it has in view, we have our best basis for a reply to the objections. Without the light of Christianity, human history is dark indeed, and hardly intelligible to any serious mind. And though difficulties may be left even from the Christian point of view, yet the most perplexing questions are solved, and solved not in the way of bare possibility and speculation, but on the ground of actual facts, on the basis of a revealed economy, which is full of blessings and of grace for the human race. This gives us points that "throb with light," in the midst of all the darkness. God's government of the world is thus seen to vindicate itself. As the scientific study of nature has given the best reply to the well-known Lucretian objection, "stat tanta praedita culpa," so the thorough study of history will reveal to us a wisdom in the divine dealings, which is the best answer to inconsiderate objections to the moral government of God. But we cannot dwell upon this topic further, because for our present objects it is more needful to consider a third aspect under which the value of church history may be considered.

3. And that is, its general doctrinal bearings. Church history comprises the history of doctrines. This is its more important portion. It gives us the real internal life of the church. And it is a field more fruitful in interest than is almost any other portion of this history. Here we have that greatest of controversies, between philosophy and faith, of which all external conflicts are but the symbol. Here we are taught how Christianity approves itself as the highest reason. Here, too, we see that

> "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
> The eternal life of God is hers,
> But error, wounded, writhes in pain,
> And dies amid her worshippers."

It is animating to follow this record, and note the stadia of that grand process through which the church has been passing, in order to come to a full comprehension of God's revealed will, and to reconcile the verities of Christianity with all other known truth. Each age has here had its special office. It is as if no one period had been able to grasp the full meaning of revelation; the first age was devoted to the Incarnation and the Trinity; the next to sin and grace; the next more especially to the polity and the sacraments; the age of scholasticism to a systematizing of the previous labors. The Reformation brought out into bold relief the doctrine of justification, and the true idea of the church, while it delivered the church from an usurped ecclesiastical authority, and it produced the largest body of symbols and confessions. Then came the period of the conflict of Christianity at all points, even to its foundations, with criticism and philosophy, its contests with all the forms of infidelity, and the great attempt — in the midst of which we now stand — to reconcile the whole of Christianity with all the thoughts and interests of the race, to bring all our knowledge of human and divine things into one self-consistent system.

And whoever reads this inspiring record in a right spirit, will find it to have a two-fold value; it guards against heresy, and it confirms the essential truths of Christianity.

It is a preservative against error, according to the maxim, "forewarned, forearmed." Many an objection made against what are called the formulas of doctrine, would vanish, if the history of those formulas were known. And, in fact, they cannot be thoroughly understood excepting in the light of their history, which tells us the reason for almost every word in the chief definitions. The formula then

becomes full of life. If it is seen how Arius, and Pelagius, and Sabellius, were conquered, we shall give less heed to the attenuated repetition of their thrice slain objections. It is a wise saying, "that only he who is able to trace an error to its roots, can tear it up by the roots." If we get at the roots, we need not spend so much time on the new sprouts of heresy. We shall thus be less apt to quake at every objection to the truth, and we shall have more of that calmness which is one prognostic of victory.

Of equal service is the history of doctrines, in confirming us in the truth. If, in the year 1384, Wyckliffe could write, "Truly aware I am, that the doctrine of the gospel may, for a season, be trampled under foot, and even suppressed by the threatenings of Antichrist, but equally sure I am that it shall never be extinguished, for it is the recording of the truth itself," much more may we say this now, with a faith confirmed by the history of almost five subsequent centuries. There have been, and there will be, conflicts; but those truths which are both old and new, which are always and never old, which are always and never new, have still maintained their vantage ground. Those very truths, against which human reason has brought the subtlest objections, the Incarnation, the Trinity, Atonement, Justification and Regeneration, those very truths, which to the superficial view seem contrary to reason, because they are above mere natural reason, are the ones which have received the strongest additional confirmation, in the progress of doctrinal discussion, which have approved themselves as fundamental in the Christian system. Thus, for example, the doctrine respecting the Person of our Lord, the union of the human and divine natures in his sacred person, that central doctrine of Christianity, has been assailed by every imaginable objection; some have denied his divinity, at the expense of his humanity; others, his humanity at the expense of his divinity; others still, have feigned a nature neither human nor divine; some have confounded the natures; others have divided the person; every form of philosophy, in each successive age, has done battle against this most vital and most comprehensive truth — and almost every form of philosophy has come at last to pay it obeisance. It has maintained its hold, so that in every century men have bowed at the name of Jesus, with such love and faith, as none but a suffering God-man could inspire. And the history of this truth reveals to us its sublimity and authority, and shows us the great practical end to be gained by a review of past controversy, and that is, in the mutations of human opinions to see the immutability and progress of divine truth.

4. This study of church history is of importance, not only in these general doctrinal aspects, but also, in the fourth place, in its application to present controversy.

We live in an age and in a country of sects and of controversies, and this is not so bad as an age of indifference or of spiritual bondage. Sects are better than coërcion, and controversy than thoughtlessness.

But this variety of opinions imposes the necessity of a broader theological culture, so that we may know the grounds of difference and the points of agreement. The study of the history of opinions contributes to this.

All present controversy has a tendency to sharpen and limit the vision; the study of history has a tendency "to inbreed within us," what Milton calls, "that generous and Christianly reverence one of another, which is the very nurse and guardian of Christian charity." It gives a position above the controversy which is of inestimable value, especially to him who is involved in the controversy. Thus can we best distinguish between the essential and the contingent.

All intense doctrinal discussion has, likewise, a tendency to run back upon metaphysical distinctions, and to make these appear of too great relative importance; and as these distinctions are not so readily apprehended by the popular mind, there is a strong disposition on the part of the polemic, for the sake of popular effect, really to misinterpret his opponent, and to say that he denies the whole of a truth, when he only objects to some one of the forms in which it may be stated. And this, too, in forgetfulness of the fact that phraseology, which to the popular mind is definite, has become indefinite among theologians through the stress of controversy. The study of doctrinal history does not make any one less scrupulous in the use of terms, but rather more so; and it also shows the value of nice distinctions, and that is, that they are rather scientific than practical; and it makes one averse to the petty and easy art of the unscrupulous polemic, who appeals to popular prejudice to sustain a cause which he is in danger of losing in argument. He, who knows the full history of controversy, will be as little disposed as any one, to tamper with the truth for the sake of novelty; he will see the wisdom of the forms in which it is embodied; but he ought also to acquire such breadth of vision, that he will not unnecessarily exalt minor points of difference, even for the sake of displaying his own orthodoxy. It is easy to gain the notoriety of a polemic — little knowledge is needed to that; it is easy to exalt the difference between Old School and New, between Presbyterians and Congregationalists; but it is wiser and better to

work together for our common good, and against our common foes. A state of things in our American churches, which should lead to more serious collisions between those so substantially at one as are Congregationalists and Presbyterians, which should annul that old Christian freedom and brotherhood, which made transitions from one to the other easy and unnoticed, could not be too much deplored. Far distant be the time, when it can be said, that he who would go from hence thither cannot, neither ought any man to come hither from thence.

But the controversies among Protestants are not those in which church history has the most solid and needed lessons to convey. There is the still more important and urgent controversy between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic communions. While the political power of Rome is dying out at the heart, its spiritual claims are exalted at the extremities. And from the very nature of the Romish polity, this spiritual includes a political claim, wherever it can be enforced. Its dignitaries may praise republicanism, and toleration, and rights of conscience, and the social compact, in republican cathedrals and in the halls of Congress; but, behind the rights of man are the rights of the church, the toleration they invoke is for them and not for mankind, the inviolable conscience is the Roman Catholic conscience; and, above all social compacts, is a sovereign and infallible church. They catch the popular ear by words, which when interpreted in the light of their full system, are abhorrent to the popular ear. It may be, that they will yet be plagued by their own inventions, and that what is policy in the leaders may become conviction in the followers.

And this church invites us to a conflict, which cannot long be put off. It throws down the gauntlet, and boasts of our decline, perverting the facts of modern history, as it forged donations and decretals of all. And there is need among our ministry of a more thorough study of its real character, for the flowing lines by which we now vaguely define its differences from us, are not the real lines on which the battle is to be fought. Rivers are said to be good for the boundaries of peaceful States, but bad for the defence of armies. If we would learn the real power and strategy of Rome we must away from the rivers, to its hills and encampments.

The strength of Rome is in its completeness and consistency as an organic system. The Roman Catholic system is the most comprehensive, subtle, self-consistent, flexible and inflexible polity, which the mind of man ever wrought out for purposes of spiritual and tem-

poral authority. Its parts are knit together. Doctrines, polity and rites — they are all members of one body, an organized, aggressive and zealous spiritual hierarchy, whose claims run through all the relations of life, trespass upon the sanctity of the family, unbind the oaths of political allegiance, and know no human or civil rights, which are not subordinate. From the cradle to the grave it accompanies each of its members with its mystical sacraments. It changes its astute policy at each emergency; as has been said, "it neutralized Aristotelianism by scholasticism, printing by art, the Albigenses by the Franciscan order, and a Luther by a Loyola." It is wise even to wiliness, and when it seems to succumb, it is just preparing to strike. It has something of that insatiable variety which Cicero attributes to nature, and also of that complex order, which modern science finds everywhere in nature. It can afford to be inconsistent for a moment, that it may be consistent in the end; it can outbid any other system with both the populace and the politician. It is by turns servile and despotic. And its systematic power is rivalled only by its zeal, and its zeal is not greater than is its adaptedness to almost all moods and classes of mind. It awes by its power those whom it cannot enchant by its flatteries; it is harmless to the submissive, meek to the inquiring, and intolerant to every adversary. It appeals to all the senses in its varied rites; it charms the understanding by the consistency of its system, and it subdues reason itself by its claims to infallibility. It is seductive to the barbarian, and alluring to the imaginative; its later converts have been among cultivated minds, who have lost sympathy with human rights, and despaired of reason, and were glad to submit to a venerable authority, which was strong through its traditions, and unfaltering in its aspirations. And all its policy and efforts look forward to one great end, that of a spiritual domination, embracing all the great temporal interests; the supremacy of a single see, having its seat in that ancient, venerable Rome, which, having conquered the whole of the old world, and been supreme in mediaeval times, would also give the law to the whole modern world, and make of Rome the centre of the earth.

While the strength of the Roman Catholic system is thus to be found in its consistency, and completeness and pliancy as an organized whole, the arguments in its favor, and its means of defence against assault are chiefly on historical grounds. From the nature of the case, its claims to unity, infallibility and supremacy stand or fall with its tradition. This open foe of all our Protestantism, and this covert foe of all our civil rights can be thoroughly undermined only

on the historic field. The wisdom of the Reformers was seen as conspicuously in the production of the Magdeburg Centuries, as in any other of their works, and the Annales of Baronius, with all its continuations, have not filled up the breaches which were then made in the Roman bulwarks. A superficial study of history may be favorable to the Papacy, but a thorough exploration reveals the gaps in its assumed successions, destroys the figments of its traditions, shows the arts by which it came to power, and the gradual rise of its corruptions until Christ was hidden, and Christianity externalized and materialized, and the whole ecclesiastical system wrought out under Pelagian views of human nature and carnal views of Christ's spiritual kingdom. And the modern portion of that history exhibits the judgment that has been passed upon this usurping hierarchy. Even if, on historical grounds, Rome might prove itself fit for the middle ages, on the same grounds it can be proved unfit for the modern world. What might have been Catholic in mediaeval times, is sectarian in modern times. Its history since the Reformation contains an argument against it as strong as is that derived from the record of the growth of its previous corruptions. Under the ardor of the attack, it did indeed at first exhibit the revival of missionary zeal; but its Eastern missions have died away, and its churches in South America are among the most corrupt forms of Christianity. In Europe, its intolerance has provoked all the great religious wars; it has armed the Inquisition with new powers; it has published the decrees of Trent; and it has produced, denounced and welcomed back the society of the Jesuits. The decrees of Trent and the Jesuits are the great products of Rome since the Reformation; and in these decrees it has petrified itself in its doctrinal corruptions, and in the Society of Jesus we have a body, all whose spirit does violence to the sacred name it bears. In our own country we might have more hope of its reform, were it not that its leading advocates are so thoroughly hostile to our general spirit as a people, and so ultra-montane in all their tendencies.

And it is also worthy of remark, that in all the great contests of Christianity with its modern foes, Rome has kept in the back-ground. Once it led. But from the very nature of its system, it is not able to meet manfully the questions between science and revelation, between philosophy and faith, between the past and the present. The honor of these conflicts has been given to Protestantism; all the controversies between materialism and pantheism on the one side, and Christianity on the other, have been conducted under Protestant auspices.

Rome does not know how to reconcile Christianity with popular rights, nor reason with revelation. It cannot do this on the basis of its system. It has said something about these things, but it has not discussed them. It can enforce duties, but it cannot recognize rights. It does not know man as man. Nor does it know, nor is it able to satisfy the highest spiritual wants of man. It is not fitted to grapple with the great social problems of modern life. And while the whole of modern society is stirred to its depths by these great questions, which must be met and answered, this venerable hierarchy, in its great councils, is busying itself most intensely with that most important theological inquiry, upon which so much can be said and so little known — the immaculate conception of the virgin.

A review of the whole history of the Roman Catholic Church is thus one of the best means for refuting its claims, showing us that what it attempts in theory never has been realized in fact; that, if in its grandeur, it be like the venerable cathedrals in which its service is chanted, it is also like the greatest of these cathedrals in another respect, and that is, it has never been completed, — as also in another point, that however grand they are, they are not large enough to hold, nor strong enough to bind that spiritual Christianity, which rests in Christ and not in the church, in justification and not in works, and which is ever favorable to human reason and to human rights.

5. That same history of the Church, which may thus be of use in respect to present controversy, is also of value in preparing us for the future. It has a prophetic office. It bids us look forward to the progress of the church, and to the unity of the church.

"It is a maxim in the military art," once said Napoleon, "that the army which remains in its entrenchments is beaten," and eminently does this hold true of the moral conflicts of the race. And as we read the record of the past victories of the church, we realize more fully its missionary character, and acquire greater confidence in the reality of the scriptural promise that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

And for the future unity of the church, as well as for its missionary expansion, the study of church history may serve to prepare us.

If any lesson is written broad and deep upon the whole course of Christ's militant church, it is this, that the unity of the church is to be the consummation of the church, and not the means of its consummation. This unity is to be attained by means of its inward life, and not by means of its outward forms. External unity is not Christian union. Nothing is more conspicuous in Christian history, than the

disdain with which external forms and successions have been treated when they cramped the spiritual power and progress of the Christian church. Nor is such unity to be found in a sacrifice of faith to feeling, though without the feeling it cannot be realized. There must indeed be more of Christian charity, and a more whole-souled faith, living in the great spiritual realities of God's kingdom in Christ. But there must also be — and here is where the study of the doctrinal history of the church has its important bearings, — a thorough and comprehensive review of the whole course of Christian theology, so that each sect and each doctrine may be judged in the light of the great central truths of the Christian system, and receive its true relative position. Put the church question, and the sacramental question, and the inquiries concerning divine sovereignty and free agency; put the doctrines of atonement, and justification, and regeneration, in their real relations to Christ the living Head; exalt his person and work, and his intimate relations to believers; make him the centre of our systems, as he is of our faith, as he is of the divine revelation, as he is of the history of the church, as he is of the whole history of our fallen race, as he is of the whole kingdom of God in time and in eternity, and we are advancing farthest and fastest towards that unity of the church which is to be its hallowed consummation. And that he is this centre, the whole history of his church, next to the Scriptures, gives the most convincing evidence.

In the spirit in which I have now attempted to set forth the nature and the worth of the science of Church History, it will be my aim to teach it, as the Lord may give me strength, in training in this school of the prophets such a ministry as our American churches now need. If ever churches needed a thoroughly trained ministry, it is our American churches in their present position and conflicts. If all the wisdom and fulness of the Christian system ever needed to be poured into the very heart of any society, ours is that society, — so united in a few great political and religious convictions, and so divided on all other points. Though the mariner has a richly-freighted bark, and all the powers of steam, and even the terrestrial magnet, he needs more than ever the stars and the sun, and the best instruments of science to tell him where he is. No theological education can be too thorough for our ministry, which does not interfere with the higher moral and spiritual qualifications for the ministerial work. And the most thorough intellectual discipline does not do this, though an inferior culture may. For the most sublime truths of the Christian sys-

tem are those which have the greatest practical efficiency; and the most comprehensive study of these truths will enable the preacher to apply them most directly and wisely to the heart and life, and such study alone can qualify him to answer all the objections which he must encounter. Only he who knows the times in which he lives, can act upon the times; and only he who has studied the past, can know the present, and act wisely for the future.

We need a ministry trained for conflict and discussion, and trained through investigation and discussion; for on the field of open controversy all the great questions which come thick and fast upon us are to be adjusted. We need a ministry qualified to refute error by showing its grounds, and to advance truth by displaying its symmetry; which can meet argument by argument, a vain philosophy by a higher wisdom, novel speculations by showing either that they are too novel or too antiquated, pretended ecclesiastical claims by pointing to the gaps in the succcssion, and the assumptions of an infallible church by the documents that prove its fallibility. We need a ministry which shall be conservative without bigotry, and progressive without lawlessness; which shall neither nail the conscious needle to the north, nor strive to watch without the needle's guidance; which shall hold the truth in its fulness, and the truth in its simplicity, and the truth in its symmetry, and the truth in its power; which shall sympathize with all human wants and woes, and which above all temporal wants shall labor for the spiritual welfare of immortal souls; which shall be ready to live and to die for the church as the body of Christ, and for Christ as the Head of the church, and for all men for the sake of Christ and his kingdom.

We need a ministry filled with the powers of the world to come; living in the grand realities of God's spiritual kingdom, and really believing that it is the Lord's; that he hath not forsaken it, that he will not forget it; that though a woman may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb, yet God will not forget his Zion. Behold, he says, I have graven it upon the palms of my hands, and thy walls are continually before me. Fear not, for I am with thee. I will bring thy seed from the East, and gather thee from the West; I will say to the North give up, and to the South keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.